

Powerful Alternatives



Helping homeless and at-risk girls and young women

Spring 2016

New AFG Program Prepares Middle School Girls For College

Funded by donors, first-year initiative has 33 girls planning and saving for post-secondary education

“I am going to go to college, become a lawyer, and then become President of the United States,” asserts Guadalupe, who is 13 years old and will be the first from her family to go to college. Guadalupe, like many of the other 32 young women in AFG’s new Asset Building Project, is intelligent and creative, but unfortunately faces many obstacles in her path to graduating college.

**The Problem: High College Drop-out Rates,
The Solution: The Asset Building Project**

Every year, young women like Guadalupe struggle to keep up with college classes, despite being high achievers in high school. In addition to the academic challenge, they have difficulty paying for things like books, transportation, and food, despite receiving financial aid. Because most of the young women in AFG’s programs are the first in their family to attend college, they often have trouble adjusting to leaving home and living in a new environment. If they are not able to develop a strong support system to help them overcome these obstacles, many drop out in their first or second year of

college.

That’s why AFG started this new initiative. The **Asset Building Project** is geared towards middle school aged young women in AFG’s Prevention Program and aims to prepare them financially, academically, and culturally for educational futures after high school.

A Group of Generous Donors Help Prepare Them Financially

Through the Asset Building Project, AFG opened a college savings account for each of the young women in the program. The young women and their families com-
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You can be the mentor that changes a child’s life. Right now, we need 18 Spanish speaking mentors to be matched with girls already enrolled in and dedicated to the program. Contact Jenny Clement, Volunteer Services Manager, at 313-361-4000 x 248 to sign up!

With Your Support, Naisha Received a Second Chance

After experiencing homelessness, Naisha is now graduating from high school this spring

Naisha is only 17, but you wouldn’t believe it if you met her. Quiet, humble, and lighthearted, she speaks with the ease of someone beyond her years. Naisha has suffered a lot of setbacks in her short 17 years, and that’s why graduating from high school is such a big deal for her.

“High school was both easy and hard. The hard part was dealing with the people, the school part was easy,” Nai-

sha explains. During her high school experience, Naisha had to switch schools because of challenges she faced with her peers, and her grades suffered because of it. All the while, she was having similar problems at home, “There were a lot of disagreements, arguments, and fights happening,” she remembers.

Searching For Somewhere to Go



At only 17, Naisha became homeless. Your generosity means that Naisha, and other young women like her, have a safe space to focus on making positive choices. Thank You!

It all came to a boiling point, and she was kicked out of her house. Naisha, unsure of where to go, went to live with her boyfriend. Not long after, that living situation became unstable, and she had to leave. Naisha had nowhere else to turn, and as a minor, she had very few options open to her. “I was in a cab, going from shelter to shelter. I tried a few different

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mitted to depositing a minimum of \$5.00 per week in their 529 savings accounts - a type of saving account specifically designed for saving funds that are restricted for post-secondary education. Then, up to \$500 of their savings will be matched by funds to be provided by AFG donors! These funds will not only help cover costs such as tuition, books, transportation, and more, but the act of saving will also keep each young woman focused on their educational plans after they graduate from high school.

Workshops and Tutoring Help Prepare Them Academically

Additional program elements include tutoring and financial literacy training for girls and their family members, concrete steps to learn about and gain exposure to college as a real option, like college campus visits, field trips to learn about career options, and much more. Each week, during AFG's After-School Program, the young women participate in workshops on the topics of financial literacy, applying for financial aid and scholarships, and more. It is evident that they are soaking up the information like sponges, as they discussed the downfalls of loans and credit cards one night during dinner. "You have to pay interest on loans if you don't pay it back right away and credit cards are the same way. But if you save money, the bank gives you interest," explains Guadalupe.

Mentors Help Prepare Them Culturally

Each of the young women in the program will be matched with a mentor to help her stay on track in school, assist her academically, and give advice on college and careers. "My mentor took me on a tour at Wayne State University. I got to interview two college students and ask them about high school and college.

"I want to create new things for the world! I will probably do robotics," shares Charitee. "Or you can find a cure for cancer," suggests Guadalupe.

They told me that the ACT's and SAT's are hard," shared Yaritza. As Yaritza's experience with her mentor shows, mentors are an irreplaceable part in helping each of the young women in this program succeed once they arrive to college. Because many of the young women

in the program will be the first in their family to attend college, they have lots of questions, and their mentors will provide them with firsthand experience about what to expect and how to prepare for their future!

You Can Help a Young Woman Achieve Her Dreams

"I want to create new things for the world! I will probably do robotics!" shares Charitee. "Or you can find a cure for cancer," suggests Guadalupe. Your support will help allow Charitee, Guadalupe, Yaritza, and their 30 other peers pursue their dreams.



Ways to Support AFG While You Shop

We invite you to support girls & young women through Kroger Community Rewards and AmazonSmile

Below are two ways that you can earn monetary donations for AFG - while doing your regular shopping!

If you are a Kroger customer, Kroger Community Rewards is an easy way to help AFG! Kroger will generously donate a portion of each of your purchases back to AFG. The more points you earn, the more Kroger will donate to AFG!

- If you have already enrolled in Kroger Community Rewards and are supporting AFG, thank you! In order to keep the donations coming to AFG, you must re-enroll each year. After signing in at Kroger.com, click on your account, scroll down to "Community Rewards", click "Re-enroll" and then select Alternatives For Girls (AFG's number is 90987) as your gift recipient.
- First time signing up? Simply register your Kroger Rewards card on Kroger's website. After creating an account, scroll down to "Community Rewards" and click "Enroll." Then select AFG as your gift recipient.

If you are an Amazon customer, by shopping at Smile.Amazon.com and designating AFG as your nonprofit of choice, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to AFG, for every eligible purchase you make!

- To participate, visit Smile.Amazon.com and sign in using your Amazon account email and password. Next, under "Your Account" select "Change Your Charity". Search for "Alternatives For Girls" and select AFG as your charity of choice.
- Or, if you're new to Amazon, create a new account and then you will be prompted to select your charity of choice. That's it! Now, when you shop at Smile.Amazon.com, your purchase will help support AFG!



Every day she faces obstacles in receiving her education. Your support means she can start planning her bright future today.

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shelters, but either I was too young, or they were full. I stayed at the mall that day until I could find somewhere to go. That's when I remembered AFG."

Naisha had worked with a group from AFG's Prevention Department while at her summer job at a local park and remembered AFG also had a shelter. Naisha called AFG and after AFG staff picked her up, she started the hard work of getting her life back on track. "I told my case planner my main goal was to graduate," she shares. And graduate she did! With your support, Naisha was provided a safe place for her to focus on her education. "When I got kicked out, I didn't go to school. When I came to AFG, I focused on school work instead of other people", Naisha shares.

Planning For Her Future

Now, she has already taken the SAT, ACT, and been accepted to a local community college where she will begin her associates degree this fall. Once she walks across the stage and gets her diploma, Naisha is in control of her future - and has the excit-



"[At AFG] I got a lot of help that I needed. I'm back home, everything is going good. I got a job!" Thank you!

Naisha, pictured right, learned new and profitable sewing skills at AFG.

ing opportunity to choose her career path, "I've wanted to be a lawyer, a detective, a police officer, a nurse. I used to write stories, too, so maybe I could become a

writer," she dreams, with a smile. Thanks to your support, Naisha is able to choose her own future, instead of having forces outside of her control choose it for her.

Through the family counseling services she received at AFG, Naisha was able to reunite with her family and continue to work through their differences. "I got a lot of help that I needed. I'm back at home, everything is going good. I got a job!" After attending a recent training fair at AFG, Naisha was hired as one of the members of the new Sew Great Detroit class. "I knew how to sew by hand, but I didn't know how to use the machine. But I learned pretty quickly!" Naisha says, excited to practice her skills while making her own designs.

You Help Girls & Young Women – Every Day

Naisha is graduating, has a new job, and is going to college in the fall, with a new outlook that you made possible. By supporting AFG, you're providing a safe place for young women for whom AFG may be the only option. Thank you! 

Mission:

Alternatives For Girls' mission is to help homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy and exploitation, and help them to explore and access the support, resources and opportunities necessary to be safe, to grow strong and to make positive choices in their lives.

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Shelter and Transition to Independent Living:

AFG's Shelter Program provides a stable home, counseling, and life skills training to homeless young women age 15-21 and their children. The goal is to empower them to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Outreach and Education Services:

AFG's Outreach Program helps teens and women engaged in high-risk activities, such as street-based prostitution, drug use, and gang involvement, to understand the risks of such activities and transition to safe choices and healthy lives.

Community Based Prevention:

AFG's Prevention Program serves girls 4-18 to help them avoid teen pregnancy, gang involvement, drug and/or alcohol abuse and school truancy. We engage them through after-school programs, a teen leadership program, and a summer camp.

Powerful Alternatives is a publication of Alternatives For Girls

Anna Weaver, *Editor*
903 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48208
Phone: (313) 361-4000
Crisis Line: 888-AFG-3919
www.AlternativesForGirls.org
aweaver@alternativesforgirls.org



903 W. Grand Blvd.
Detroit, MI 48208

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BRIEFING ROOM

Role Model Dinner Raises Crucial Funds Thanks to Donors and Volunteers!

On March 16, Alternatives For Girls held our 27th Annual Role Model Dinner at Cobo Center. Nearly 400 guests gathered for a night of fun and inspiration.

Thanks to you, this year's dinner raised over \$231,000 to support our critical work! AFG would like to thank this year's generous sponsors, our dinner Co-Chairs, Don Manvel and Barbara Whittaker, and the entire Role Model Dinner Committee, who helped make the event an incredible success, Luther Keith, our emcee, all of the amazing volunteers who helped make the event possible, the young women from our programs who shared their stories, and all who attended to show support for AFG!



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College Students Spend Spring Break Volunteering at Alternatives For Girls

During the month of March, students from colleges all over the country volunteered at AFG as a part of Alternative Spring Break, a week of service where students engage in volunteer work instead of traditional Spring Break trips.

Thank you to the fifty students from Boston University, Colorado State University, the University of Massachusetts, and Wayne State University who spent their Spring Break at AFG! With their help, girls and young women received homework help and were engaged in fun, educational workshops. They also gave some much needed support to the Resource Center, prepped the clothing closet for spring, and cleaned and organized the library and the playroom in the shelter.



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